GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1262
ANSWERED ON:02.05.2016
Problems Faced by Tea Industry
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Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Tea Industry/ Tea gardens of West Bengal are facing a host of problems ranging from ageing tea bushes to climate change;
(b) if so, the details thereof along with total number of tea growers employed in Tea Industry especially in tea gardens of West Bengal;
(c) the impact of these problems on their jobs and the steps taken or being taken by the Government to address them;
(d) whether the Tea Industry has requested for a special tax rate and if so, the details thereof along with the reaction of the Government thereto and the details of direct employment provided by the Tea industry especially to women during the last three years;
(e) whether there are no minimum wages for tea industry in West Bengal and if so, the details thereof along with the reasons therefor; and
(f) whether the Government/ Companies have shown interest in taking over tea estates in North Bengal and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)
(SMT. NIRMALA SITHARAMAN)

(a)& (b): Lower productivity caused by old age of the plantations andsenile tea bushes is a critical problem facing the Indian tea industry. Besides, climate change leads to higher incidence of pest and disease resulting in loss of production. The total number of workers directly engaged in Tea Plantations in in the country is 11,28,458which includes 3,27,029 in West Bengal.

(c): Ability of the tea gardens to keep the labour gainfully employed at times comes under stress because of fall in production and productivity. Under the XII Plan Scheme namely 'Tea Development and Promotion Scheme', the Tea Board extends financial assistance to the tea estates and also to the small tea growers, inter alia, for replanting, rejuvenation and consolidation of the old aged tea bushes. Non-chemical method of pest control is promoted to address the pest/disease problem of the industry. Measures taken also includes water harvesting during drought period and development of well-designed artificial drainage system to flush out excess water to nearby streams and river lets. Financial assistance in the form of subsidy at the rate of 25% of the capital cost not exceeding Rs.80,000/- per hectare for creation of Irrigation facilities is provided under the 'Tea Development and Promotion Scheme'. Tea Board has supported replanting and rejuvenation of tea bushes over an area of nearly 52520 hectare during the XI Plan and XII Plan.
(d): Representations are received from tea industry from time to time on issues seeking tax relief/concessionand incentives. Such representations are regularly reviewed by the Government in line with overall policy for promoting overall industrial growth. The tea industry provides direct employment to 11,28,458workers which includes 6,20,625 women workers.

(e): The wages for workers employed in tea estates in West Bengal are fixed through a process of collective bargaining held at periodicintervals of three years between the Management, the Workers' Union and the State Government. The present minimum wagesfor tea workers in West Bengal as per the said tripartite agreement made on 20-02-2015 is Rs.132.50.

(f): Tea Board has received 19 (Nineteen) bid applications in response to various Expressions of Interest (EOI) invited by the Tea Board for management of the gardens covered by the Central Government notification issued on 28.1.2016.

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